



## SOME COMMENTS ON THE 2016 IAPLC WINNER

by Karen Randall

### GENERAL EVALUATION

In this first year after we lost Mr. Amano, I felt it was more important than ever to be true to his vision of Nature Aquarium in the IAPLC. Sometimes in recent years there have been a lot of layouts that put more emphasis on tricks of perspective, photography and lighting than they did on excellence in plant husbandry and sound design principles. There seemed to be much less of this among the top 100 tanks this year, which I was pleased to see.

However, I feel there is still too much emphasis on very intricate works with tiny pieces of wood that just cannot hold up to submersion over time. To me, though these tanks may be very beautiful at the moment the photo is snapped, they do not have the kind of longevity that makes them a good, natural aquatic home for fish, which is supposed to be the most important category (most highly weighted) of this contest. For that reason, I have had to mark these tanks down, pretty as they are.

Likewise, while excellence in rockwork is to be commended, and is certainly a material that can be maintained for a very long time, the effect of huge caves and other rockwork that makes it difficult to maintain a tank is, in my opinion, to be discouraged. Fish should not be considered a "decoration" for the aquascape, but an integral part of the whole. For that reason, layouts that make it possible to maintain the tank for their benefit must be rewarded.

▼ 2016 GRAND PRIZE WINNER by Takayuki Fukada, Japan, "Mighty Cave".



▲ 2016 IAPLC Bronze Prize #0005 by Adriano Montoro Nicácio, Brazil, "To My Friend in Heaven".

### BEST AQUARIUM

My choice for best aquarium this year is, "To My Friend in Heaven" by Adriano Montoro, Nicácio, Brazil, which ended up in 5th place [and won second place in the AGA's International Aquascaping Contest in the Aquatic Garden 120L–200L category—see page 18]. While this is not a terribly innovative aquarium, it is exquisitely well done and gets top marks in the other judging criteria. The rockwork is beautiful, and the gravel path is very natural looking. The plants are not just well chosen, and beautifully grown and maintained, they have also been trimmed with great skill. The fish chosen are lovely, and clearly comfortable in their surroundings.

The top ranking tank in the contest, "Mighty Cave" by Takayuki Fukada, Japan, was my second place choice. I loved this tank, but I felt I couldn't give it full marks as a natural habitat for fish. As a result, I had to take away just enough marks that it came in second. Besides the incredible work with rock and plants, Mr. Fukada's daring choice of a very unusual (for aquascaping) species of fish, deserves high praise. This tank would not have had the impact it has had he chosen any other fish! 🐟

